

STYLE GUIDE

This section specifies the preferred writing style for communication products developed by and for the DOE Office of Science and Technology.

1. STANDARD STYLE GUIDES

The following works provide acceptable guidance on most stylistic issues. The remainder of this section contains rules and tips for points commonly debated, confused, or mistaken.

- United States Government Printing Office, *Style Manual*, Washington, D.C., 1984. Primarily a printer's style book to standardize copy submitted to GPO. Limited in detail and somewhat dated.
- *Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed., University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993. Widely regarded as the industry standard for general publications. Thorough and well indexed.
- *Associated Press Style Book and Libel Manual*, 6th trade ed., Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass., 1996. Espouses an informal, journalistic style appropriate for articles intended for general readership. Not as complete or well organized as *Chicago Manual*.
- Ellen Swanson, *Mathematics into Type: Copyediting and Proofreading of Mathematics and for Editorial Assistants and Authors*, American Mathematical Society, Providence, R.I., 1971. Prescribes format for equations and other mathematical expressions.

2. STANDARD REFERENCE WORKS

Many acceptable dictionaries and usage guides are available. The following are well respected and serve some special purposes.

- *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed., Merriam-Webster, Springfield, Mass., 1994.
- *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage*, rev. ed., Merriam-Webster, Springfield, Mass., 1993. Addresses common problems of confused or disputed usage.
- *McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Scientific and Technical Terms*, 5th ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, 1994. Includes the vocabulary of science, engineering, and technology far beyond that found in general dictionaries.
- *CRC Handbook of Chemistry and Physics*, 78th ed., CRC Press, Boca Raton, Fla., 1997. Popular scientific reference containing the most frequently used data in science.

3. FORMATTING STANDARDS

3.1 Justification

Use left, not full, justification.

3.2 Spacing

- Use only one space after colons and between sentences in running text. Use a word processor's find and replace function to correct inadvertent double spaces.
- Close up dollar, percent, and degree symbols on accompanying numerals (\$21 million, 95%, 32°F).
- Use hard spaces (Ctrl+space) to prevent line breaks between numerals and abbreviations.

3.3 Bulleted lists

- Punctuate before a bulleted list the same as in running text. That is, use a colon when a bulleted list follows an independent clause; use no punctuation if the listed items are integral to the introducing sentence.

Routine maintenance checks serve three purposes:

- replacement of worn out parts and fluids,
- verification of operating parameters, and
- performance of safety inspection.

At a routine maintenance check, the mechanic

- replaces worn out parts and fluids,
- verifies operating parameters, and
- performs a safety inspection.

- List items should have parallel grammatical structure if possible. Both lists above are parallel: the first is a series of noun phrases and the second a series of verb phrases. The following list is not parallel because a verb phrase is followed by a noun phrase and a complete clause.

Wrong: At a routine maintenance check, the mechanic

- replaces worn out parts and fluids,
- verification of operating parameters, and

- he performs a safety inspection.
- Capitalize list items and use end punctuation only if items are complete sentences.
- Unless the list is short and simple, use a blank line before and after bulleted lists. When list items are long, blank lines between bullets may improve readability.

3.4 Tables

- Call out tables in the text and place them as soon afterwards as possible without causing unnecessary page breaks within tables.
- Center captions above tables, in bold font, with sentence-style (first-word) capitalization and no end punctuation.
- Keep the format as simple as the data will allow; avoid unnecessary shading and ruled lines.
- Use bold for column headings, italics for subheadings within the body.
- Capitalize the first word in column headings and row entries; otherwise, capitalize conservatively.
- Specify units in captions, column headings, or row entries, as appropriate.
- Justify left except for columns of like units, which should be right or decimal justified.
- Tables should be self-contained. Define abbreviations and acronyms on first use or in notes. If taken from another source, give the reference in a note (*Source: . . .*).

3.5 Figures

- Call out figures in the text and place them as soon afterwards as possible.
- Center captions below figures, in bold font, with sentence-style (initial) capitalization and appropriate end punctuation.
- Figures should be self-contained. Define abbreviations and acronyms in the legend or notes. If taken from another source, extend the caption with the reference (*Source: . . .*).

3.6 References

- Works listed as references should be available to the public, and entries should be sufficiently complete to enable readers to retrieve cited works. Works not cited in the text should be eliminated or listed separately and labeled appropriately.
- Citations in the text can take either of two styles. Numbered citations require footnotes or endnotes and a separate alphabetical bibliography. Author-date citations require only a bibliography. The alternative selected influences the form of the bibliographic entries. Consult an appropriate style guide and follow it consistently.
- Some styles permit “et al.” after the first author’s name if there are more than three authors. The second element (al.) is an abbreviation, but the first (et) is not.

3.7 Bad breaks

Guard against

- line breaks that separate numerals from units and titles from names or otherwise confound easy reading,
- columns or pages that end with headings,
- columns or pages that contain only the first or last line of a paragraph,
- right-hand pages that end with a hyphen, and
- first and last lines of a paragraph that end with a hyphen.

4. USAGE GUIDE

4.1 Sentence structure

- Use complete sentences.
- Two independent clauses can be linked with a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, nor*) preceded by a comma. If the logical relationship between independent clauses is clear without a conjunction, they can be linked with a semicolon. Thus, these sentences are correct:

The plateaus are arid most of the year, but the western foothills receive ample rainfall.
The plateaus are arid most of the year; the western foothills receive ample rainfall.

But all of the following are incorrect:

The plateaus are arid most of the year, the western foothills receive ample rainfall.
(No conjunction—this is a “comma splice.”)

The plateaus are arid most of the year but the western foothills receive ample rainfall.
(No comma—this is a “run-on” sentence.)
The plateaus are arid most of the year the western foothills receive ample rainfall.
(Neither a conjunction nor a comma—also a “run-on” or “fused” sentence.)

4.2 Agreement

- Don’t use plural pronouns to refer to singular nouns (or pronouns) to avoid “sexist” expressions.

Wrong: **Everyone** must make **their** own travel arrangements.

Try recasting the sentence with a plural antecedent:

Attendees must make **their** own travel arrangements.

- Collective nouns like *staff* can be singular or plural, depending on whether the group members are acting as a unit or as individuals.

The staff **has** met all of **its** fiscal years milestones.

The staff **have** submitted **their** personal goals for the coming year.

- Organizations are singular.

Ajax Electronics demonstrated **its** new characterization device.

Not: **Ajax Electronics** demonstrated **their** new characterization device.

4.3 Hyphenation and compounding

- Nearly all words beginning with the following prefixes are “closed” (without hyphens):

ante	co	inter	micro	non	pro	semi	supra	un
anti	counter	intra	mid	over	proto	socio	trans	under
bi	extra	macro	mini	post	pseudo	sub	ultra	
bio	infra	meta	neo	pre	re	super		

Thus, *anticontamination*, *nonprofit*, and *semiannual*, not *anti-contamination*, *non-profit*, or *semi-annual*.

Exceptions: repeated vowels (*anti-inflammatory*, *semi-independent*), forms that invite misreading (*re-creation*, *un-ionized*, *pro-democracy*), numerals (*pre-1914*), capitalized

roots (*mid-August*), and hyphenated roots (*non-board-certified*). When a prefix is added to an open compound, the hyphen becomes an en dash (*pre–Civil War*, see “Dashes”).

- Two or more words expressing a unified idea can be used as a compound adjective. Such expressions are generally hyphenated when they immediately precede the word modified. The rule is particularly applicable when one of the components is a present or past verb form and when the expression combines a numeral with a unit of measure or its abbreviation.

uranium-bearing waste
sun-dried tomatoes
pilot-scale experiment
time-of-flight recorder

short- and long-term monitoring
20-day process
6-mm tubing
7-m-wide pit

Such expressions are not hyphenated when they follow the word modified.

The tomatoes are sun dried.
The pit is 7 m wide.

Exceptions:

- Don't hyphenate if the first element in the compound ends in *-ly* (e.g., *hotly contested issue*).
- Where meaning is unmistakable (e.g., *nuclear power plant*, *stainless steel pipe*), hyphenation is not necessary.
- Acceptable usage changes over time. Frequent use has made some compound adjectives (e.g., *cost-effective*) so commonplace that they are hyphenated regardless of their placement relative to the word modified. By the same process, other compounds (e.g., *airborne*, *crosscutting*) have come to be spelled solid.

Some expressions are two words as one part of speech but hyphenated as a different part of speech. Some preferred forms are in the word list (Sect. 5). Many electronic spelling checkers are weak in this area. Consult a good dictionary (see Sect.2).

4.4 Punctuation

Series. Use commas to separate elements in a series from each other. Omitting the last comma (before the conjunction) leads to confusion in some cases. Separate elements with semicolons if any element contains an internal comma.

The winners were Tom, who invented the game; Bill; and Rachel.

Colons. Colons are equivalent to full stops. Use them to introduce explanatory sentences, appositives, quotations, and lists (including bulleted lists) appended to independent clauses. Do not use colons to introduce objects or complements of an element in the introductory statement. Thus, these sentences are correct:

The contractor was responsible for three phases: characterization, remediation, and monitoring.

The contractor was responsible for characterization, remediation, and monitoring.

But the colon in the following sentence is superfluous:

The contractor was responsible for: characterization, remediation, and monitoring.

Dashes. There are two kinds of dashes, both different from the standard keyboard hyphen. Don't use spaces before or after them.

- Use em dashes^{*} to set off an abrupt change in thought that interrupts sentence structure (a rare occurrence in formal writing). Em dashes are also useful to set off interrupters that contain internal commas.

The first three phases—characterization, decontamination, and dismantlement—are already funded.

- Use en dashes^{**} to indicate a range of dates, times, or numbers:

May–October
1958–65

8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
pp. 22–56

Quotations and apostrophes.

- Desktop publishing software offers both straight quotation marks (open and close are identical, as on a traditional typewriter) and “fancy” (“curly”) quotation marks.^{***} Use one style or the other consistently. Use straight marks as symbols for minutes and seconds as subdivisions of degrees.

^{*}WordPerfect: Insert/Character/Typographyic Symbols/Number (or Ctrl+W) 4,34.
Word: Insert/Symbol/Special Characters (or Ctrl+Alt+Num-).

^{**}WordPerfect: Insert/Character/Typographyic Symbols/Number (or Ctrl+W) 4,33.
Word: Insert/Symbol/Special Characters (or Ctrl+Num-.)

^{***}In WordPerfect, the choice is made in Tools/QuickCorrect/Options.... In Word, use Tools/Options/AutoFormat.

- Use single quotation marks only to enclose a quotation within a quotation.
- Material in quotations must precisely reflect the original. Use brackets to enclose alterations or insertions. Use an ellipsis (three spaced periods) to indicate an omission within a sentence. Use a fourth period if the omission bridges a sentence break.

“Insulation . . . to dampen sound should be given careful consideration.”

“The invasion involved three forces The first brigade attacked at dawn.”

- Use apostrophes to create plurals of letters and abbreviations with periods. Plurals of other abbreviations, acronyms, and numbers are formed without apostrophes.

R's

EISs

1990s

M.D.'s

HWRs

the '70s

- To indicate an omission at the beginning of a word as in the last example above, use the apostrophe, not a single open quote (*not* the '70s).

Italics. Use italics for foreign expressions not considered part of the English language (The school's motto is "*Principes, non homines.*"), scientific names of genera and species, letters used as symbols for variables, and the titles of freestanding documents and periodicals. (Use double quotation marks to enclose the titles of parts of larger works: articles, chapters, etc.) Don't italicize scholarly Latin words and abbreviations (*ibid.*, *e.g.*, etc.)

Parentheses. For enumerated lists, whether displayed or in running text, use both open and close parentheses around the enumerator, not just the latter. In text, use brackets to enclose a parenthetical expression within another parenthetical expression ([]). In mathematical expressions, the order is reversed: { [()] }.

4.5 Capitalization

Capitalize titles, trade names, and other proper nouns. Otherwise, current practice is to capitalize conservatively. Don't capitalize *state*, *complex*, *focus area*, and similar words except when they are part of a specific proper term, but *Federal* and (DOE) *Headquarters* are always capitalized. Capitalize terms in lists, including glossaries and lists of acronyms, only when they are proper nouns or adjectives or begin a complete sentence.

4.6 Numerical terms

- Numbers smaller than 10 are generally spelled out in text, and large round numbers may be more easily read if words like *million* or *billion* are spelled out. Do not repeat a spelled-out number in parentheses. Spell out numbers less than 100 that precede a compound modifier containing a numeral (fifteen 50-m sampling wells).
- Use numerals even for numbers smaller than 10 in many cases: measurements (2 hectares); mathematical expressions (a factor of 5); and specific times, time periods, and dates.
- Spell out numbers at the beginning of sentences or rephrase the sentence.

4.7 Abbreviations and acronyms

- In writing for a general audience, do not abbreviate infrequent units of measure. In writing for a technical audience or when units of measure are numerous, use abbreviations after numerals. Define unfamiliar abbreviations on first use.

The technetium concentration was reduced to 1.5 becquerels per gram (Bq/g).

The GPO *Style Manual* includes a list of standard abbreviations.

- Don't confuse e.g. (for example) with i.e. (that is, specifically) or misspell etc. (et cetera, and so on). Set off all three from adjacent words with a comma.
- Isotopes can be written in the form uranium-235 or ²³⁵U (not acceptable at beginning of sentence), *not* U²³⁵.
- Spell out acronyms on first use.
- Acronyms used as nouns need not be preceded by "the." The article may improve readability when acronyms are used as adjectives.

Most research at INEEL is funded by DOE.

DOE subcontractors administer the SRS security program.

4.8 Trademarks

Capitalize trademarked terms (Band-Aid, Xerox). Symbols that often accompany registered names on product packaging and in advertising (™ ® ™ ©) need not be used in running text. An alternative is to use the symbol (always a superscript) on the first occurrence only and/or to

list all registered marks in the front matter.

5. WORD LIST

Most questions about the selection and form of words can be answered by a dictionary or usage guide. The following list includes commonly misused terms and preferred OST usage.

all right—should not be spelled alright
alternate—a substitute
alternative—an option
among—when there are more than two
appendices, appendixes—equally acceptable, be consistent

between—when there are only two
borehole
buildup (n.), build up (v.), built-up (adj.)
by-product

cleanup (n., adj.), clean up (v.)
comprise—means include, not constitute
crosscutting
cross section (n.), cross-section (v.)

data—can be treated as either singular or plural
database
decision maker
decision making (n.), decision-making (adj.)
dense, nonaqueous-phase liquid
downhole (adj.)

e-mail
end effector
ensure—to make certain

flowchart
flow diagram
flow rate
focus area—generic unless part of complete name
FY98—no space

glove box

ground water (n.), ground-water (adj.)—These are the preferred DOE forms. *Groundwater* (one word) is in wide use as noun and adjective in scholarly and general literature.

insure—to make a financial guarantee
in situ (neither hyphenated nor italicized)

life cycle (n.), life-cycle (adj.)

mock-up (n.), mock up (v.)

NO_x—not NO_x

off-gas (n., adj.)
off-site (adj.), off site (adv.)
on-line (adj.), on line (adv.)
on-site (adj.), on site (adv.)

principal (n.)—head, (adj.)—main
principle (n.)—rule

scale-up (n., adj.), scale up (v.)
setup (n., adj.), set up (v.)
startup (n., adj.), start up (v.)

under way—two words

workforce
workstation

X ray (n.), X-ray (adj.), x ray (v.)

6. STYLE SHEETS

Develop document- or series-specific style sheets to standardize spelling and capitalization of unusual terms, mechanical conventions like hyphenation, unfamiliar abbreviations, and any departures from standard usage. Style sheets and lists of acronyms should be developed early in the process, especially when multiple authors or groups are involved. Style sheets should accompany documents passed to another person or group for editing or quality assurance.

7. WRITING TIPS

- Be succinct. Many style guides suggest alternatives to common wordy phrases.
- Organize writing logically to emphasize importance, sequence, and complexity.
- Use active rather than passive sentences when possible.

Passive: The proposals were ranked by three peer reviewers.

(because the subject **receives** the action of ranking)

Active: Three peer reviewers ranked the proposals.

(because the subject **performs** the action of ranking)

Active sentences are generally more succinct, direct, and interesting.